

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE MENOMONIE AREA
MENOMONIE, WISCONSIN
AUGUST 25, 2025**

The Budget Hearing and Annual Meeting of the School District of the Menomonie Area were held on Monday, August 25, 2025, in the Tiered Lecture Hall at Menomonie High School, located at 1715 Fifth Street West in Menomonie, Wisconsin.

Board members in attendance included Rachel Henderson, Amy Riddle-Swanson, Amber Kersting, Abe Smith, Dominique Stewart, Angela Wolf, Michelle Dupree, Emily Hines, and Dale Dahlke. Also, present were district directors and administrators: Dr. Joe Zydowsky, Tonia Kowieski, Samantha Hoyt, Diane Schofield, Brian Seguin, Stacy Lee, Keila Drout, Shannon Branch, Michael Kennedy, Casey Drake, Bart Boettcher, and Mark Anderson.

Electors and other attendees who registered included Allen Crowe, Joyce Uhler, Josie Pillman, Audrey Thomas, and Kathy Weber. Recording Secretary Jenny Mikesell and videographer Steve Hanson were also in attendance.

School Board President Rachel Henderson convened the Annual Meeting and Budget Hearing at 6:00 p.m. Abe Smith nominated Henderson to serve as chairperson of the meeting, with Amy Riddle-Swanson seconding the nomination. The motion was approved by voice vote, and Henderson was named chairperson.

Chairperson Henderson appointed Dominique Stewart as parliamentarian and designated Samantha Hoyt and Tonia Kowieski to serve as tellers. She also recognized the current board members and expressed appreciation for their hard work and dedication.

The minutes from the August 26, 2024, Annual Meeting were then presented for review.

Eric Nelson, Director of Business Services, presented the Treasurer's Report and Audit Summary on page six of the annual meeting booklet.

District Administrator Dr. Joe Zydowsky welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced members of the administrative team, board members, and district staff. He also recognized their ongoing contributions to the district.

He noted that the School District of the Menomonie Area includes the following facilities: Menomonie High School, Menomonie Middle School, Knapp Elementary School, Oaklawn Elementary School, River Heights Elementary School, Wakanda Elementary School, the Administrative Service Center, the Downsville School Building, and the Bjornson Environmental Center.

Dr. Zydowsky also shared the district's current demographics, which include a student enrollment of approximately 3,200 students, supported by 257 teachers (4K–12), seventy-eight paraeducators, and 106 support staff members. The administrative team consists of one district administrator, one assistant superintendent, eight directors, six principals, and three assistant principals.

The SDMA met expectations on the 2024 state accountability report card, and the district saw significant gains in student achievement. Staff continued to develop the multi-level support systems and continued progress in strengthening trusting relationships with students. A new business manager was hired, and a mid-year budget meeting was held with the community in January. Due to declining enrollment and staffing challenges, Downsville Elementary School was closed at the end of the school year. Additionally, a new five-year strategic plan was developed, incorporating valuable input from the community gathered through listening sessions and hundreds of survey responses.

Key initiatives and priorities for 2025-2026 include continued work on the SDMA strategic plan: preparing our students, supporting our students, engaging our staff, enhancing family and community partnerships, and operating efficiently and effectively. The District's work plan outlines 33 strategic goals, including increasing students' sense of belonging, improving communication with families, staff, and the community, conducting a staff perception survey

to identify strengths and areas for growth, reviewing elementary school attendance boundaries, and opening a near-site clinic in Menomonie to help manage healthcare costs while providing SDMA staff with more affordable and accessible primary care.

Eric Nelson, Director of Business Services, reported that the total budget for 2025–2026 is projected at \$65.6 million and includes several major funding categories. Every expenditure within SDMA is assigned to a specific fund. Property values in the district have continued to rise in recent years, with the equalized property value estimated at 4.17% for the upcoming year. The estimated mill rate is \$5.59, representing a slight decrease of \$0.01 from the previous year. However, this rate may increase due to rising voucher program costs and the absence of new equalization aid in the state budget.

Nelson shared the key budget changes for 2025–26. Additions include a continued revenue increase of \$325 per pupil, a 2.95% salary increase, and a projected 2% rise in health insurance costs. Additionally, State Reimbursement for Special Education is expected to increase to 40%, up from 30% in 2024–25. On the reduction side, Regular Education Open Enrollment payments will increase by \$1,140 per student, and Special Education Open Enrollment payments will rise by \$640 per student, resulting in a net loss of \$128,300. The shift of Act 12 Personal Property Aid into the revenue limit for 2025–26 will result in a loss of \$310,492 in spendable dollars.

Nelson reported a projected 0.66% increase in revenues and a 0.15% increase in expenses for the 2025–26 budget compared to 2024–25. Operating expenses for 2025–26 are allocated as follows: 76% for salaries and benefits (including transfers for special education), 13% for purchased services and communication, 6% for transportation, 0% for equipment, 2% for supplies, books, and software, and 3% for miscellaneous expenses. On the revenue side, 66% of operating revenues are expected to come from state equalization and per-pupil aid, 28% from local property taxes, 2% from federal grants, 1% from other state aids and grants, and 3% from miscellaneous sources.

The cost of private school vouchers is added to the SDMA tax levy each year, increasing the amount local taxpayers are required to pay. For 2025–26, the estimated voucher impact in SDMA is \$1.1 million. This estimate is based on the past growth of the program for budgeting purposes. The actual amount will be determined using the third Friday enrollment count in September.

Nelson reported that the Fund 10 balance is sufficient for operational and cash flow needs, eliminating the need for short-term borrowing. In the preliminary budget for the 2025-26 school year, the SDMA is projecting a balanced budget. The 2024-2025 Fund 46 balance is \$12,016,613 unaudited, with no contribution scheduled in 2025-26. The school district has reduced the OPEB debt and transitioned from a defined benefit to a defined contribution plan. The 2024 actuarial study indicated that savings in the trust surpassed anticipated benefits accrued by SDMA retirees, so no additional contribution was needed in 2024-25. The 2025 actuarial study will be released this fall. The Fund 80 tax levy is projected to remain the same for 2025-26. Fund 80 had a balance of \$71,551 in 2024-25 (unaudited).

The SDMA continues its responsible fiscal management and long-term planning. A slight decline in student enrollment is projected for 2025–2026, with potential budget impacts if the trend continues. Uncertainty in the state budget may affect key funding areas, including per-pupil aid, special education reimbursement, and categorical funding. Changes at the federal level may shift more fiscal responsibility to local and state sources. The district must remain flexible and responsive to these evolving conditions.

Facilities maintenance and upgrades remain essential to providing safe and effective learning environments. However, deferred maintenance and rising capital needs are placing increasing pressure on the budget. Consideration of a capital referendum in the future to ensure the district can continue to meet its long-term infrastructure goals.

Abe Smith made a motion, seconded by Brian Seguin, that \$18,537,275 be levied upon the taxable property of the School District of the Menomonie Area for the operation of district schools and discharge of long-term debt obligations for the 2025-2026 school year. The motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

Tonia Kowieski made a motion, seconded by Samantha Hoyt that the members of the Board of Education be compensated with annual salaries as follows: Board President—\$1,200, and all other members—\$1000 each. The motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

Samantha Hoyt made a motion, seconded by Stacy Lee, to say that members of the Board of Education to be compensated for actual and necessary travel expenses incurred in performing duties. The motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

Brian Seguin made a motion, seconded by Abe Smith, to adjourn the meeting at 6:41 p.m. The motion passed with a voice vote.

/s/Dominique Stewart

Dominique Stewart

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Minutes Approved: September 8, 2025